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Evaluation

Evaluation of UNDP contribution to strengthening local governance

Executive summary

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I. Introduction

1. The demands on the United Nations Development Programme to assist countries with local governance reforms are rapidly growing given the increasing realization that such reforms are critical for bringing about transformations in the lives of men and women, especially among the poor, those who are discriminated against, and disadvantaged communities. Recognizing the growing importance of local governance reforms, the Executive Board in September 2008 approved the present thematic evaluation of the contribution of UNDP to strengthening local governance.

2. From a human development perspective, promoting local governance is intrinsically important as it enhances people's capabilities to participate in decision-making. It is also instrumentally significant because of the contribution that improved local governance can make to service delivery and standards of living. UNDP, through the focus areas of democratic governance, poverty reduction, environment and energy, and crisis prevention and recovery, supports local governance reforms that: (a) create and establish entitlements, especially for the poor and marginalized through enhanced democratic participation and representation; and (b) improve public provision of goods and services to ensure that, at a minimum, citizens enjoy universal, equitable and non-discriminatory access. The scope of the evaluation has been limited to examining these two dimensions of UNDP support to local governance.

3. UNDP has supported local governance and active decentralization processes for the best part of 30 years, and more intensively since 2000. While the first multi-year funding framework, MYFF 1, for 2000-2003, mentions three relevant corporate objectives relating to local governance, the second, MYFF 2, for 2004-2007, identifies local governance as one of seven service lines (line 2.6) under the core goal of "fostering democratic governance", together with decentralization and "urban/rural development". The UNDP Strategic Plan (2008-2013) internalizes local governance priorities and, in its section 1, underscores the importance of civic engagement and using local government "capacity and resources to deliver effective economic and social policies that promote human development and manage the public services that citizens expect." It identifies several priority areas for UNDP support, including capacity strengthening of national and local authorities to undertake participatory planning processes, assessment and adoption of effective service delivery systems. It also affirms the need to restore the foundations for local capacities for development, planning, management, and conflict resolution.

4. The evaluation assesses local governance interventions using the following criteria: (a) relevance of UNDP outcomes, outputs and activities; (b) responsiveness of UNDP to changing conditions and needs; (c) effectiveness of UNDP in achieving stated results; (d) efficiency of UNDP regarding use of human and financial resources; and (e) sustainability of the results to which UNDP contributes. In addition, the evaluation assesses the extent to which UNDP cooperation in the implementation of local governance has affected the role and economic and social status of women. It also reviews the way in which UNDP has been able to forge partnerships to promote local governance.

5. The evaluation has carried out a meta-analysis of 37 Assessment of Development Results reports, an analysis of close to 80 outcome and project evaluations that have a local governance component, and an in-depth scrutiny of

country programme and project documents, progress and completion reports and national strategy documents. In addition, three types of country-level analyses have been carried out. The first is a desk review of available local governance-related documents for 50 countries — in 30 of which, during the period 2004-2007, more than 10 per cent of the total programme budget was devoted to local governance-related activities, and another 20 were suggested by regional bureaux and others as having significant interventions in local governance. A subset of 10 countries of the 50 were randomly identified for a more in-depth examination; and telephone interviews have been conducted with key personnel from within and outside UNDP to validate the findings emerging from the desk review. Lastly, six countries, namely, Bolivia, Comoros, Mali, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ukraine, were purposively selected (to represent different regions, different levels of human development and different settings) in order to gain a better on-the-ground understanding of local governance reforms. Detailed interviews with stakeholders and partners within and outside UNDP were conducted to further validate the overall findings of the assessment.

6. UNDP supports a wide range of interventions to promote local governance, including local governance for improved service delivery and acceleration of the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); for State-building and peacebuilding; for enhanced democratic representation; and for ensuring environmental sustainability. Many local governance initiatives focus on women and indigenous peoples, often in places where local governance is still taking shape. An important emphasis is placed on strengthening the inclusiveness and accountability of subnational governments, ensuring they have the capacity to manage the opportunities and responsibilities created by decentralization and devolution. At the subnational level, local institutions reflect great differences in history, culture, capacity, infrastructure, styles and practices. Responsive to this diversity, UNDP emphasizes local governance for improved service delivery in order to improve the ability and capacity of local governments to become better administrators, raise revenue and deliver high-quality services. It works to help strengthen and deepen democratic representation by engaging with marginalized groups and local leaders to promote accountability, inclusion and participation, and the representation of citizens.

7. UNDP supports MDG localization. It helps develop the capacities of local governments to formulate, plan, monitor and implement participatory local development plans, working together with civil society and other local organizations. UNDP also promotes efforts to include marginalized groups and communities whose voices are too often unheard. It works with national Governments to prepare reliable statistics on poverty and MDGs disaggregated by region and to provide policy advice on, for example, how to develop and implement fiscal transfer schemes and socio-economic policies that would benefit the poorest regions. UNDP helps countries strengthen their capacity to address environmental challenges at the global, national and community levels where the poor are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and lack of access to clean, affordable energy services. UNDP activities have been aimed at improving access to sustainable energy services, effective water governance, sustainable land management to combat desertification and land degradation, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including through the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme.

8. As a co-sponsor of UNAIDS, UNDP helps countries put HIV/AIDS at the centre of national development and poverty reduction strategies; build national

capacity to mobilize all levels of government and civil society for a coordinated and effective response to the epidemic; and protect the rights of people living with AIDS, women, and vulnerable populations. UNDP supports countries to create an enabling human rights environment, promote gender equality, and address HIV-related vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls. In the area of crisis prevention and recovery, UNDP helps address the causes of violent conflict through development programmes that promote participation, consensus-building and the non-violent management of conflict. It advocates for early recovery through the strengthening of post-crisis governance, facilitating effective local-level early recovery, and supporting coordinated early recovery planning. In post-conflict recovery and disaster recovery phases, UNDP assists countries that have experienced severe disruptions in critical national or local capacities, by strengthening post-crisis or post-disaster governance functions and restoring the foundations for development at the local level.

II. Findings

9. **UNDP support for local governance reforms has been highly relevant.** UNDP country programme documents, which include support to local governance reforms, have typically been drawn up in partnership with national Governments. This has ensured both government ownership and alignment with national priorities and national development and poverty reduction plans. The correspondence with national priorities has been further ensured by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, in which UNDP plays an active and central role, and which has provided a strategic framework of cooperation between the overall activities of all United Nations agencies. Beyond broader programmatic relevance, UNDP activities have frequently been relevant in addressing specific development concerns, both at the policy and operational levels, relating to strengthening democratic representation and participation as well as the delivery of services.

10. **UNDP has responded positively to national Governments in extending support for local governance reforms; however, since that is demand-driven, it has at times resulted in an ad hoc rather than strategic approach.** UNDP has often responded positively to specific requests from national Governments and formulated projects or programmes in support of local governance. For example, in Bhutan, UNDP has contributed to the country's successful transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy by consistently responding to requests from the Royal Government of Bhutan. However, UNDP has not always been sufficiently proactive, in part, because of the absence, in many settings, of a longer-term strategic plan or road map drawn up (in consultation with government and non-State stakeholders) for UNDP support to strengthen local governance. Notwithstanding the frequent absence of such plans, there are numerous instances where UNDP has been able to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging or changing circumstances, such as Georgia's fast-moving reform agenda, to national requests for extending support to local governments and communities by setting up regional offices, as in Peru, and area offices, as in Uzbekistan.

11. **The absence of a unifying framework for local governance and guidance notes drawing on UNDP cumulative experience in different political settings has tended to limit the organization's capacity to adequately respond to the requirements of strengthening local governance.** Many of the commonly used

terms in the context of local governance — local governments, local authorities, subnational governments, local development, local economic development, local area development, local human development — have meant different things to different people within and outside UNDP. Similarly, the dynamics of decentralization and local governance processes have not always been fully understood. In the absence of a unifying framework and common understanding, UNDP has not been able to fully leverage its potential comparative advantage. UNDP relevance has been further diminished by the failure to develop adequate knowledge products that distil experiences of strengthening local governance in different settings to inform policymakers and practitioners in governments and communities.

12. **UNDP support for local governance has effectively created entitlements through increased democratic representation and contributed to improved service delivery.** There have been numerous instances where UNDP has effectively generated numerous positive benefits. In many countries, UNDP has helped build capacities of State and non-State actors, empower local communities, given voice and representation to the socially disadvantaged, built trust between government and people, promoted dialogue on local governance, improved service delivery and developed different models of community contribution, financing and participation. Several interventions for the inclusion of indigenous and marginalized groups have been effective, as have interventions extending support to local governance under conditions of conflict recovery and prevention.

13. **There have been instances in several countries of UNDP successes in promoting gender issues in local governance; however, a strategic and systematic effort at mainstreaming gender concerns into local governance has been missing.** UNDP has been actively promoting gender issues in local governance in a number of countries, but systematic gender analysis of local governance interventions has not regularly been conducted. Though there has been recognition that women's empowerment has meant more than their participation in electoral politics, appropriate indicators for assessing improvements in gender relations and greater equality in the benefits flowing to women and men have not been worked out for most local governance initiatives. Similarly, capacity-building initiatives have targeted women but adequate data have not been gathered to assess whether or not women have benefited from greater awareness and training.

14. **UNDP-supported local governance projects have, on occasion, been innovative and scaled up; however, in other instances, UNDP initiatives have remained high profile "boutique projects", pilots or one-time-only localized initiatives and have not made a broader development contribution.** There are several instances of UNDP-supported local governance initiatives being regarded as innovative and scaled up, as in Cambodia, Mozambique and Nepal. However, it has not been atypical for local governance initiatives to be set up as "boutique projects" upon the strong initiative of one or several individuals within UNDP, external experts or government officials and politicians. Such projects have not been scaled up, partly because they tended to be cost-ineffective and there has been little national ownership. Interventions have remained pilots or one-time-only demonstration projects when they have not been backed by sufficient advocacy and stakeholders' involvement during the design, planning and implementation stages, and have not necessarily tied in with larger efforts at reforming legal and policy frameworks and public administration, or with resource mobilization and management efforts. Moreover, UNDP has tended to view its interventions in local

governance as ends rather than as necessary means to an end. In Ecuador, for instance, the UNDP and UN-HABITAT programme for enhancing institutional capacities for urban development management by linking land survey maps with land registers made a "significant contribution" by creating certainty regarding land property, legalizing properties in urban areas and increasing municipal revenues from property tax. However, it is not clear whether or not this led to increased social investments, reduced urban poverty and improved service delivery for the poor. Overall, a focus on activities, processes and outputs without a long-term vision and strategy has led to UNDP often losing sight of people and their human development.

15. **Context-specific factors have played a critical role in achieving the effectiveness of local governance initiatives.** Political stability, the dynamics of political parties, the presence and engagement of non-State actors, the degree of local ownership, the extent of trust between local institutions and the public, and people's access to local governments and other institutions have been among key context-specific factors that have directly affected local governance projects. Effectiveness has been boosted by strong support of the political leadership and the existence of the right incentives for central and provincial governments to decentralize and empower local governments. Interventions to improve service delivery have been more effective when UNDP has simultaneously extended support for capacity-building, improving accessibility of service users, raising awareness and promoting outreach, and when local governance reforms have had the backing of strong national governance legislative and policy frameworks as well as government resources, both financial and human. In conflict situations, factors positively influencing outcomes have included the presence of a strong peace infrastructure made up of networks, communities, and highly trained human resources for peacebuilding, the strategic engagement by UNDP of various people's groups, government agencies and local government units, the existence of peace agreements and active civil society participation.

16. **Deficiencies in the results framework developed by UNDP have been a common factor affecting accountability of local governance initiatives.** Many UNDP-supported projects in local governance have not had clear statements of results backed by corresponding indicators and markers of progress. Outcome statements have frequently been too general and unclear or not meaningful and measurable. Indicators at the outcome and output levels have not been clear and have lacked baselines and targets. These deficiencies have compounded weak monitoring in the area of local governance and have hampered a systematic impact and outcome evaluation of the UNDP contribution to strengthening local governance.

17. **While UNDP has delivered goods and services in line with administrative procedures, its efficiency in supporting local governance initiatives has been adversely affected by cumbersome procurement processes, a weak field presence and rigid project management.** The transparency of UNDP procedures across projects — where UNDP support has been restricted to administration of funds or to management of procurement and where UNDP has played a (more) substantive programmatic role — has added to UNDP credibility in the field. Project partners, by and large, have agreed that UNDP procedures and processes have been "rather agile and unencumbered" compared with those of the Government. At the same time, there have been frequent complaints that UNDP procedures have been lengthy, especially those linked to procurement, causing delays and adversely affecting the ability of UNDP to deliver against results. In some cases, a mismatch

of funding and programme needs — i.e., country offices having spread their resources too thin across an ambitious country programme — has adversely affected the efficiency of operations. UNDP has also often not been present at the subnational level and UNDP staff has therefore frequently been overstretched when it has come to dealing with local governments. Moreover, UNDP has not always had the capacity to provide the robust, professional responses necessary to handle complicated and deep-rooted challenges of local governance. Finally, inflexibility in modifying projects to changing circumstances as well as the lack of synergy between similar projects within a country and across thematic clusters have also constituted factors limiting efficiency.

18. **Insufficient attention to key design, advocacy and implementation elements have contributed to a weak record of sustainability.** UNDP initiatives in local governance have been more sustainable when the organization has worked simultaneously on legislative frameworks for decentralization, nurtured effective partnerships with the Government, community-based organizations (CBOs) and communities, and developed appropriate methodologies and approaches that could be replicated. On the other hand, several factors have adversely affected sustainability. Weak risk analysis (political, administrative, social, corruption, etc.), poor advocacy to promote broad-based ownership, insufficient micro-macro linkages and unrealistic timelines have prevented adoption of projects for scaling-up nationwide. Sustainability has been adversely affected when resource implications have not been fully factored in and this has resulted in insufficient capacity-building efforts within government and among non-State actors. The limited transfer of in-house knowledge on local governance to other units within UNDP and to partners has contributed to this. In addition, the withdrawal of funds and staff at the end of the project as well as the high turnover of staff both in government (at all levels), within partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and within UNDP have adversely affected sustainability.

19. **Sustainability of local governance initiatives has been more difficult to achieve in conflict situations.** Political instability in contexts of conflict, emergency and recovery has jeopardized sustainability. Strengthening the policy environment for peacebuilding has often required efforts to address key conflict issues, such as natural resource extraction, equitable distribution of resources, injustice, and marginalization of disadvantaged sectors. At the national level, peace and development efforts have failed to take root when local governance reforms have not been accompanied by sufficient allocation of resources; and at the local level, service delivery, capacity-building for peace, and confidence-building among groups and sectors have not always taken place on a continuing basis. Sustainability has also been hindered by a weak policy environment for peacebuilding at the national level, the inconclusive status of peace negotiations with rebel groups, episodes of armed conflict that set back the gains of peace on the ground, and leadership shifts among partners resulting from elections, political appointments and institutional changes that cause delays or adjustments in programme implementation.

20. **UNDP has built good working relations with central Governments on issues of local governance; however, it has been less successful in establishing strong linkages with sectoral line ministries and subnational levels of government, thereby undermining the potential contribution of UNDP.** Links with central Governments have been particularly strong, based on a long history of cooperation in many countries. While proximity to government has most often been seen as an advantage, there have been times when it adversely affected the image of

UNDP, especially in the eyes of non-State actors. UNDP has not always made the most of its proximity with the Government to push the agenda of local governance, particularly with line ministries other than the one dealing with local governance. For instance, a formal consideration of energy has been largely missing from the decentralization and sector-specific policies of several least developed and sub-Saharan African countries in which UNDP has worked. UNDP has also not capitalized on the potential linkages it could have built with other United Nations agencies to promote decentralization and local governance within different line ministries. Although improvements have been seen with the drive for One UN reforms, modalities of joint funding and programming for local governance have still been in an experimental phase. Although country offices have experimented with a variety of different modalities to improve effectiveness of operations at the subnational and local levels, UNDP has not been successful in developing appropriate modalities for working with provincial, district and local governments.

21. **UNDP has not played a sufficiently pro-active role in engaging with civil society, thus distracting from efforts to strengthen local governance.** The volume of partnerships with civil society has been high, there have been many levels of engagement, and partnerships have, in many cases, been strong. UNDP has created effective platforms for exchange of ideas and experiences, helped to instil trust between government and communities, and contributed to enhancing the legitimacy of governments in the eyes of non-State actors. UNDP support has assumed a special relevance in conflict-affected countries, when it has contributed to supporting infrastructure repair and building or creating relationships between different levels of government and civil society. However, UNDP has yet to work out effective mechanisms for partnering with non-State actors. Most country offices have lacked a long-term strategic focus and plan for engagement with civil society organizations, and downstream service delivery efforts have been greater than upstream policy participation. This has limited the impact that local governance reforms could have had on enhancing human development.

22. **UNDP has cooperated well with other development partners in strengthening local governance initiatives and has often assumed a leadership role in supporting donor coordination; however, opportunities for closer integration of partner efforts have been missed.** The role of UNDP vis-à-vis other donors and development partners has varied from country to country. It has, in some instances, assisted Governments with aid coordination. In many countries, UNDP has partnered with other United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund to promote local governance reforms. Often being the first to have initiated work in support of local governance, UNDP has assumed a natural leadership role, and in many countries, has been instrumental in bringing in other donors and helping Governments coordinate donor assistance and pooling resources. In Cambodia, for instance, UNDP has established partnerships with United Nations agencies, multilateral development banks, bilateral donors and international NGOs. While the coordination role of UNDP has often been appreciated, it has not necessarily meant that UNDP subnational and local initiatives have been meaningfully coordinated or integrated with other projects or activities supported by other agencies, or even more substantially integrated with UNDP action at other levels.

23. **UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) have worked together effectively on local governance issues in least developed countries; however, respective roles and responsibilities have not always been clear, which has led to inefficiencies.** The strategic and results agendas of UNDP and UNCDF have been integrated within the Strategic Plan. Working together, they have been able to leverage respective expertise and resources in support of local governance reforms particularly because of their perceived political neutrality and the long-standing trust built with national Governments. At the country level, the UNCDF local governance portfolio has generally been well aligned and integrated with that of UNDP. Nonetheless, there have been instances where UNCDF and UNDP have not been able to make the most of the opportunities for supporting local governance. This has occurred largely because roles and responsibilities of the two agencies have not been clarified, understood and communicated. Other gaps have been evident. The failure to jointly develop strategic plans for local governance at the country level (based on an assessment of the historical and political background, the presence and role of other donors supporting local governance, and of risks), the neglect of advocacy and lobbying functions (both within the United Nations and also outside), insufficient attention to analysis, documentation and dissemination of lessons learned have limited the impact on capacity-building and sustainability. There has usually been strong evidence of cooperation between UNCDF and UNDP at the country level, based on an understanding of the comparative advantages and mutual benefits. But that has not necessarily been the case at other levels of the organization.

24. **There have been several examples of effective partnerships between UNDP and UNIFEM in the area of local governance; however, such partnerships have been opportunistic and have not been well defined or strategic.** Owing to the complementary nature of support that UNDP and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) have offered, the two organizations have worked side-by-side in many countries and, in some instances, such as in Barbados and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, have been involved in successful joint initiatives. Despite this close proximity at the country level, cooperation arrangements have not usually been strategic or well defined. At the corporate level, cooperation between UNDP and UNIFEM has been somewhat lacking. Competition, at times, between UNDP and UNIFEM for limited resources, as well as confusion among both staff and stakeholders about the division of responsibilities between UNDP and UNIFEM, has been responsible for this.

25. **UNDP and the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) have worked together closely on local governance initiatives, although the benefits of volunteerism have remained unclear and controversial in UNDP.** UNDP and UNV have had a long tradition of working as partners in local governance. There has been considerable overlap between UNV work and the activities of UNDP in local governance. However, while UNV has been a part of UNDP, the promotion of volunteerism has not figured in the UNDP strategic results framework. There have been other deficiencies in the UNDP-UNV working arrangements. Projects have been affected by a lack of clarity and common understanding between UNDP and UNV of their respective roles and responsibilities. In some projects, UNVs have been unclear about reporting lines. Other projects have suffered from a lack of sufficient commitment from and engagement by UNDP.

III. Conclusions

Conclusion 1: UNDP has not fully capitalized on the comparative advantage it has in strengthening local governance.

26. The analytical framework of human development and human security as well as human rights developed and championed by UNDP (that draws attention to enhancing people's capabilities) gives the organization a distinct advantage in advocating and promoting the practice of local governance and is a powerful context for local governance reforms. However, UNDP has not always used human development as an organizing frame for strengthening and assessing the outcomes of local governance initiatives. Nor have these perspectives been systematically integrated into efforts at promoting local governance reforms.

27. Despite the credibility and trust it enjoys with national Governments, UNDP has not systematically attempted to engage in dialogue with all the ministries with which it partners to more broadly promote the practice of local governance. In most instances, UNDP interactions have been confined to the particular ministry promoting local governance.

28. Although virtually all bureaux and programme units deal with issues of local governance, UNDP has not been able to establish systems that promote better communication and exchange of ideas and experience across its various bureaux and their sub-units. As a result, mainstreaming and integration of the idea of local governance across practice areas have been uneven, limited and deficient. That has been particularly so at headquarters, where the work of the various bureaux and their sub-units remains compartmentalized.

Conclusion 2: The contribution of UNDP has been limited by the absence of a common understanding and sufficient corporate guidance on strengthening local governance.

29. There has been little consistency and common understanding of local governance within UNDP. Ambiguity has surrounded the usage of terms such as local development, local economic development, local area development, local territorial development, regional development, local human development, and local sustainable development, and local governments, subnational governments and local authorities. Similarly, whereas decentralization and local governance are different processes, the dynamics of both processes have not always been fully understood. Available toolkits and briefing notes have offered limited guidance on a few topics, but have not provided the overarching framework within which to address issues of local governance.

Conclusion 3: Outcomes from UNDP support to local governance have been mixed. Whereas some initiatives have had a significant national impact, others have tended to be ad hoc and isolated, not systematic and strategic.

30. Bureaux within UNDP have showcased numerous examples of support to local governance that have been innovative and effective and have benefited a large number of local communities. There have been instances where pilot projects have been scaled up nationally and the UNDP leadership role has been widely acknowledged. At the same time, there have also been projects that have had very limited impact for a variety of reasons. UNDP has often failed to ensure national ownership (not merely government ownership) of local government reforms. What

has been responsible for the limited impact has been the failure to develop a strategic plan and vision for countries of UNDP support for local governance for the constructive engagement of governments and non-State actors. Even where such a plan and vision have existed, faulty design, limited buy-in from Governments, poor advocacy, insufficient resources for scaling up, and inadequate capacity within UNDP and outside have limited the impact of local governance reforms.

Conclusion 4: UNDP has not paid sufficient attention to establishing entitlements for men and women, especially for the poor and marginalized, to ensuring effective responsiveness from subnational governments to demands made by communities, and to engaging with non-State actors.

31. Local governance initiatives have sought to improve the lives of the poor, especially the marginalized, the socially discriminated and disadvantaged groups in society. Such a focus on men and women and their well-being — the essence of the human development approach — has often been lost in the preoccupation of UNDP with activities, processes and project objectives. As a result, UNDP local governance initiatives have often shied away from an explicit focus on improving representation and empowerment of poor and marginalized groups or service delivery for the disadvantaged. Furthermore, UNDP has yet to crystallize the lessons learned from various experiences and work out effective modalities of support and partnership with subnational governments and non-State actors. Similarly, UNDP has not pro-actively supported non-State actors by encouraging establishment of necessary legal and regulatory frameworks, building their capacity, and creating national and subnational NGO platforms for enhancing their contribution to strengthening local governance. As a result, their potential to work closely for the empowerment of poor and disadvantaged communities and to bring about improved accountability in service delivery by correcting imbalances and inefficiencies in resource allocations has not been tapped fully.

Conclusion 5: UNDP has not been able to tap the extensive knowledge on local governance within the organization for better programming.

32. Few institutions engaged in local governance could have the rich experience that UNDP has in the field. Despite the advantage of working in over a 150 countries and in very diverse settings, UNDP has not yet established itself as a knowledge organization where the experience of its managers is systematically captured, analysed, organized, distilled into collective intelligence and made available for use within and outside the organization. Country offices have not been able to tap effectively into the wealth of UNDP experience either through the regional service centres or headquarters. Communication between and within bureaux and other programme units has also been limited. Although virtually all bureaux and programme units have dealt with issues of local governance, the different bureaux (especially the Bureau for Development Policy, the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery and the Partnership Bureau) have pursued different approaches and have had only limited cooperation and contact with each other. Most groups and divisions seem to have been working in their own silos without using local governance as the common platform to come together and think strategically. Systems have not been fully in place for disseminating and sharing learning within the organization and with external partners. Knowledge products have not been produced regularly and systematically to cover the wide range of topics under local governance. Formal and informal networks have been established, but they have not

been sufficiently servicing managers within UNDP or policymakers and practitioners outside the organization. Failure to tap effectively into the knowledge base has deeply hindered the effectiveness of the organization in its efforts at strengthening local governance.

Conclusion 6: The absence of a strategic framework of cooperation with its associated funds and programmes at the corporate level as well as at the country level has limited the potential to maximize results.

33. Joint programming and collaboration have not developed into a strategic partnership for advancing the respective corporate missions based on a careful assessment of opportunities, roles and responsibilities. Despite the long tradition of partnering with UNCDF and UNV, joint efforts at strengthening local governance have been constrained by the frequent absence of strategic partnerships, particularly at the country level. Even where such agreements have existed, collaboration has often been reduced to a management arrangement for project implementation. At the project level, the absence of a mutually agreed upon framework specifying the roles and responsibilities of the partners at the country level has limited the effectiveness of the partnership.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: UNDP should more explicitly and effectively mainstream local governance into all its programmatic areas of support by developing a coherent framework that is firmly grounded in the practice of human development.

34. UNDP should develop a unified framework that identifies and establishes the many linkages of the essential constituents of local governance with human development. Central to such an exercise will be the articulation of theories of change that underscore the different connections between various local governance reform measures and an expansion of human capabilities. That should help UNDP to look beyond processes and projects that promote participation, market-led development, biodiversity, etc., to more tangible outcomes such as political empowerment, greater voice for the disadvantaged, transparency and accountability as well as promotion of sustainable livelihoods for the poor, peace and security, and conflict prevention.

35. Such an overarching framework for local governance should be informed by learning from the rich and diverse experience of UNDP in this area. While developing such a framework, it will be important to keep in mind that a "one-size-fits-all" approach may dilute the relevance, hamper local ownership and adversely affect the sustainability of local governance reforms. Guidance notes need to be updated and revised based on the wealth of existing UNDP knowledge and experience in the field of local governance, and new ones need to be developed to address different aspects of local governance and decentralization in different contexts.

Recommendation 2: In developing new pilot initiatives on local governance, UNDP should be more rigorous in ensuring that they can be, and are, upscaled in support of broader policy and programmatic development results.

36. UNDP should invest more thoroughly in the development of pilot initiatives in order to ensure their success. At the outset, that would involve conducting in-depth problem analysis and involving the central Government, subnational governments,

local communities, non-State actors and other development partners in order to establish the initiative's potential for success. That approach will facilitate the development of mechanisms that will support the upscaling of the pilot initiative and the sustainability of its benefits. It would imply the establishment of rigorous planning frameworks, including meaningful indicators, baselines and targets. It would also require regular monitoring and evaluation, including of unintended effects, and involving all stakeholders, in order to learn from experience as the project is implemented. Finally, exit strategies should be clearly defined and implemented and lessons learned documented as upscaling, in most cases, will be led by national authorities with the support of other partners.

Recommendation 3: UNDP should more pro-actively and systematically collate, codify, analyse, distil and disseminate the lessons learned from the extensive experience it has in the field of local governance.

37. UNDP needs to more systematically produce knowledge products that distil the lessons learned from its vast experience in local governance across diverse and difficult settings. The extensive body of knowledge regarding local governance should be properly codified, collated and analysed. Where such documentation and analyses exist, effective mechanisms should be established for bureaux and managers within UNDP and outside to tap them effectively and systematically.

Recommendation 4: UNDP should strengthen its partnerships with its associated funds and programmes in order to enhance the effectiveness of its initiatives in local governance.

38. UNDP should take measures to further strengthen and streamline corporate arrangements for deepening local governance in partnerships with the associated funds and programmes. In order to improve the effectiveness of their partnership, at the country level, UNDP and UNCDF should jointly develop a long-term strategic plan for local governance which is consistent with and integral to national development plans and priorities. That would help in more systematically addressing deficiencies in capacity-building and resource mobilization that arise and adversely affect sustainability. Better understanding and communication of the roles and responsibilities of UNDP and UNCDF would help to reduce inefficiencies in operations. They should work on improving advocacy and lobbying functions, both within the United Nations and outside.

39. The UNDP partnership with UNV at the country level should move beyond project collaboration and become more strategic, based on a shared long-term vision of strengthening local governance. UNDP needs to make a more explicit commitment to the mandates of UNV, and not view the partnership merely as a management arrangement. In other words, UNDP should commit itself to partnering with UNV, on mainstreaming volunteerism for the many benefits that such mainstreaming brings to people, while ensuring that the deployment of volunteers builds local capacities in a sustainable manner.